DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 697 HE 018 775

AUTHOR Mtewa, Mekki
TITLE Development-Oriented Research Needs in Africa.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Science Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research, and Development in the Third World (Washington, DC, November 1981).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Role; Cooperative Programs; *Developing Nations; Foreign Countries; *Government School Relationship; Higher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Models; *Public Policy; Research Needs; *Research Utilization; *School Business Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Africa

ABSTRACT

Research models and the issue of public/private utilization of research are discussed, along with implications for development research in Africa. The following types of research are distinguished: policy research, sectoral research, academic research, and consultancy-related research. Three research paradigms are identified: (1) the ideal location for research is at the university; (2) since government is a consumer rather than a producer of knowledge, innovative research might be publicly funded but conducted by the private sector; and (3) research can be conducted by teams of academic professionals, government administrators, and private industry experts. Since university research is specialized and compartmentalized, utilization requires interaction with public policy research. Three research utilization models can be conceptualized around the paradigms. Model I is based on three sources of funding (unilateral, external, and institutional). Model II stipulates government and private sector users; research can be conducted by either university or private researchers. Model III involves a multidisciplinary enterprise with the "best" organizational form available. It is recommended that the research utilization models be considered in approaching development research in Africa. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED262697

"DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED RESEARCH NEEDS IN AFRICA"

Remarks made by

Dr. Mekki Mtewa
International Development Foundation
Washington, D.C.

IDE 012775

Science Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research and Development in the Third World, November 1981

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mekki
MTewa

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INTRODUCTION

If a definition of development research is understood to involve a continuous identification of human needs, solutions, and the processes of establishing institutions to do so, then academic researchers are limited only to the theoretical or hypothetical concerns of the research identification process. Scholars, students, and most members of the academic community become identified with the solution of policy problems, quite distinct from theoretical problems if, and when, they can propose and pursue via implementation what they believe to be the problem and the solutions to such a problem. They are merely theorizing or hypothesizing when they cannot implement what they allege to be the law of human observation and its relationship with the practical.

Given the nature and complexity of the development enterprise, it is worth while to look at three institutional alternatives:

1. establishment of corresponding university research institutions on a Consortium basis;
2. strengthening of existing university research institutions i.e. the Institutes, or
3. recommend for increased government participation in, and utilization of, research.

Since 1958 African universities and governments, thereof, have tended to recognize American political scientists. Eighty percent of those Americans who have conducted research there have been white. Very few in that number came from the predominantly Black colleges in the nation. Consequently, it is this group of

Americans which now has organized itself in the ASA and serves as development experts on the African continent. They also act as program consultants to development activities going on there in addition to providing development testimony to legislative committees. As we enter this new decade of consultancy there exists quite an insignificant statistic of black consultants for, about, or on African development. As black professionals, we can either participate through continuation of proliferation of theories of poverty, underdevelopment, and neo-colonialism; or we can programatize what we have been saying to-date and find a client quite interested in what we say about development or its research underpinnings and who can give us money to demonstate it. Dissertation research is good, but beyond it, we must be concerned with the individuals we are writing about.

CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH

Policy research is directed at government and to inform how well it is doing, what else needs to be done, and identification of areas of need where policy research would be useful. Policy research activities, therefore, include programming and its mode of execution. Sectoral research looks as sectoral initiatives with a view to helping:

a. define sector productivity objectives,
b. distinguish sectoral capabilities in areas of sectoral variability,
c. identification of areas of sectoral comparability with a view to rationalization of natural resources, and
d. recommendtions how these respective sectors might, and can, work in collaboration to solve common productivity problems.

Industrial and productivity research, in the sense that it can be applied to, and help, solve productivity problems of a nation is of idrect importance to developing governments that do depend on privately invested capital growth to measure their development growth.

Professional research is of two classes. Academic research pertains to theoretical or hypothetical validation. The bulk of academic research ends up in books, journals, dissertations, theses, or in individually controlled sets of knowledge units; occassionally, it is applied in policy. Consultancy - related research falls within the realms of applied academic involvement. However, excellence is emphasized and the need to be focused, clear, and precise in statement of recommendations. Academicians have achieved consultancy prominence in technological societies because they do possess analytical skills and a technical underpinnings of the development task. Seasoned consultant- academics are those who do understand how to extrpolate but are cautious not to be reudite unless program requirements specify so.

Like academic research, consultancy-related research is (a) conducted with an objective or goal in mind, this time not only for tenure or "the publish or perish" institutional idea, but for specific client need. We predict that universities and their respective academics will reliably use this measure of academic performance of productivity in their future assessments of:

a. the most appropriate linkage between theory and praxis, and
b. the points of covergence between institutions of learning, academics and practitioners housed in them, and what to do about their most immediate human and societal concerns which inescapably form a part of their universe.

If, therefore, professionals can profess to analyse, describe, and prescribe what, why, when, and how universal laws of human needs can be theoretized, they most probably should equally be in the position to practicalize their eruditions.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

University research is organized along the lines of disciplinary specialization. It is disciplinary expertise, it is, therefore, looked upon as a means to, and an end of, disciplinary compartmentalization. Definitively, for our purposes, specialization and compartmentalization are synonymous by function and institutional goals and objectives which they serve. The bulk of their research activities are, consequently, fragmented. Subsequently, utilization of their products is limited to the extent users know the capabilities of individuals staffing these compartments. There must exist, in other words, a clearly defined "reference group" both outside and inside in order for a systematic flow of interaction to occur between disciplinary research and public policy research.

Government Research Units - where these exist gather data and make inferences on overall departmental activities of government. The concept of department implies system specialization; consequently, its search for departmental policy data is eclectic. An institutional correspondence between disciplinary research and departmental activities can be forged. The "reference group" to which we alluded earlier must be construed as that group of departmental staff involved in a continuous search for disciplinary researchers engaged in compatible work of the respective departments and who, quite often, can be relied upon as policy functionaries in government programs.

Sectoral Research - is a highly technical, specialized, and focused research activity, which calls for persons best prepared in methodologies and expertise to translate R & D into sectoral goals and objectives. Sectoral issues transcend both theory and praxis. Within the universities, pure scientists are recruited to form the sectoral research teams. Within the domain of government, administrators are recruited to coordinate and administer sectoral programs. Together, they work to convince government and to rationalize their contributions as fundamental to the stated development task. To aid them in effective marketing of these sectoral concerns, outside consultants are quite often used.

Professional Research is, by our definition, the combined work of all segments of persons identified heretofore. Where professional research is well conceived, it capitalizes on the shortcomings of competing departmental programs and compartmentalized university research. Professional researchers do spend the bulk of their time in marketing their skills, after an assessment of program needs and problems have been made. Their research portfolios are diversified along interdisciplinary lines and tasks.

UTILIZATION

There are three competing research utilization paradigms of interest to us. By a paradigm, we mean a set of accpeted, acceptable or conventionally agreeable principles by which government policy research is understood and how it is conducted.

By research we refer to both to the process of investigation which individual consultants and institutions undertake; the tasks of analysis, description, and prescription that are involved or contained

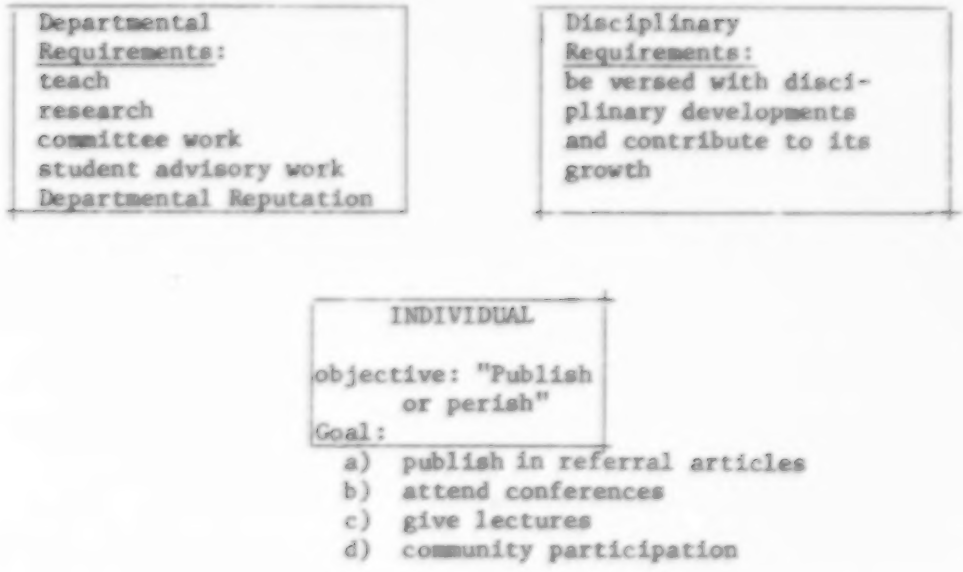
in their effort, and the value or importance which consultants and institutions attach to the end product. Utilization does, therefore, involve an understanding of the paradigm and the end-product of the research activity produced according to the stipulations of such a paradigm. By utilization we then refer to (a) a predetermined need or knowledge of the research product itself, (b) an evolving or continuous interest in the scope or form of the research outcome or, (c) some degree of organizational investment in, concern for, or specification over the research paradigm, process, or product itself caused by the presence of a clearly defined research need or policy, concern over research as an activity of operational value to the work of government, and/or conviction that research is not a purely intellectual outlet or barb for academic productivity.

Paradigm I, suggests that: the university disciplinary compartments are still regarded as the ideal locations for research. This pedagogical view claims that universities have traditionally been associated with research. To deny them or curtail their research work is to violate this pedagogical principle.

Paradigm II, suggests that: research is an innovative activity and its costs are, if not entirely, borne by taxpayers. Therefore, research should be undertaken with a clear goal and objective in mind and its product should be used with "the greatest benefit for the greatest number." Government contracting involves servicing. Government is seen as consumer of knowledge rather than as producer. The bulk of innovative research is undertaken in the private sector, quite often, publicly funded through the "contracting" mechanism.

Paradigm III, suggests that: research should be a comprehensive multi-disciplinary enterprise and it should be undertaken by the best organizational form available. This form of research falls between the convenient confines of academic-disciplinary research and the innovative research activities in the private sector. By their very nature, consultancy organizations are organized along the lines of the "best organizational form" with individual organizational units responsible for specific policy areas. There is enough room in most consultancy organizations for academic-professionals, government administrators, and private industry experts to form working teams. An obdervation should be made that most consultants are university graduates or have taught at universities. Some may have served in the public sector, others in the private sector. One way or another, they end leaving these jobs and prefer to incorporate themselves. Their knowledge of the "inside" story is what makes them survive the perils and risks of a very competitive market.

Based on the above, the subsequent utilization model can be conceptualized around the paradigms. Model I stipulates three sources of funding: unilateral, external, and institutional. Paradigm I best represents this level of utilization. The conceptual diagram appropriate to this level is as follows (See page 8):



According to this diagram, individual objectives and goals are formulated around the predominant requirements of the discipline to which he/she belongs. Disciplinary socialization, a process which does not end with graduation, involves a self-critical appraisal of disciplinary norms, but also a continued interest in the servicing and maintenance of its values. To demonstrate this continued commitment, individuals incur extraordinary expenses to "produce" theoretically publishable pieces that might earn them the desired recognition within their compartments. These are unilateral expenditures on their professional growth. Accurately interpreted, they are investments of indeterminable or determinable value to themselves.

University institutions do invest in the professional growth of their academics through the funding of research which might contribute to their's and the university's programs. Institu-

tionally - funded research work is the single most notable source of professional growth on the university campuses.

Externally funded research is of a vicious nature and is most probably programmatically or disciplinarily useful and defined. National Science Foundation grants, the National Endowments in Arts and the Humanities, and Social Science Research Council awards as well as the numerous private foundation sources are dictated by broader or specific disciplinary criteria or requirements of scholarly research. On the other hand, government grants given to universities, departments, or individuals are quite often "demonstration" grants. These are least guided by disciplinary standards than program needs. However, such funds tend to flow to individuals, departments, or universities that have an established demonstrated record of performance in identified program areas. In recent years, externally funded university research has helped generate moods of preoccupation and seriousness in departments whose ordinary interests have been to teach.

The proliferation of private professional consulting groups away from universities will most certainly impact negatively on the flow of research funds to campuses. Pedagogically inclined clients will continue to use university researchers but those clients who are easily overcome by the lobbying influence of consulting groups will turn for counsel elsewhere. Model II stipulates two users, government and the private sector. Utilization at this level is neither a simultaneous nor a permanent activity. Paradigm II did suggest that research is an innovative activity, and it expends public funds. No institutional preference was expressed since universities and private sectors can conduct it. Quite often, the

private sector contracts with universities to conduct specialized research work for them. Most probably privately contracted-out work cannot easily be undertaken within existing laboratory facilities or by private sector staff. The low overhead costs in universities makes contracting attractive. Government departments, on the other hand, contract-out with universities because there exists some of the best or established "demonstration" projects.

The conceptual diagram appropriate to this utilization model is as follows:

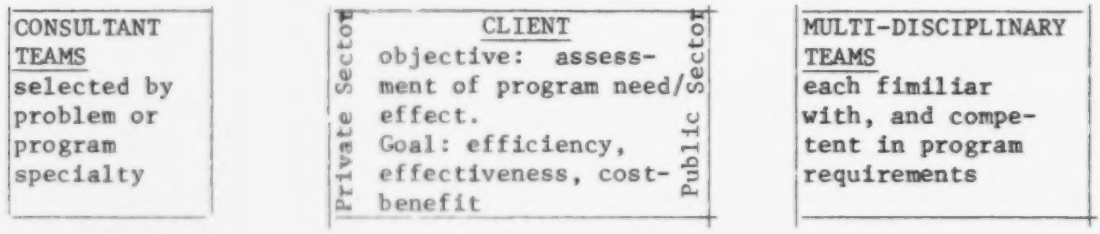
APPLIED SCIENCE ENVIRONMENT:	DEPARTMENTAL/ INSTITUTIONAL	DISCIPLINARY REQUIREMENTS:
a) private sector b) government research c) general	a) demonstrated program leader ship b) commitment to applied research c) maintenance of institutional links d) need to interact	Overall contribution to the development of the discipline

According to this diagram, disciplinary contributions are central to the continued credibility of institutional programs. These departments and institutions have formalized goals and objectives about applied research. Most applied research activities are undertaken in the areas of mathematics, statistics, chemistry, science, engineering and a few others. In these areas, because of the institutional framework of the groups themselves, most of their research activities are externally funded.

Model III provides for two users, government and the private sector. However, a series of expertise of varying complexity and individuals of diverse orientations form the work teams or contribute

to the solution of the problem. With paradigm III it was suggested that research should be a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, enterprise and it should be undertaken by the "best" organizational form available.

The conceptual diagram appropriate to this level is as follows:



According to this diagram, there is a continuous flow of energy and persons between the multi-disciplinary teams in the universities and the consultant teams outside. There is temptation for members of these teams to confuse their historical, organizational, and sometimes, professional objectives. Mindful of the fact that if left uncontrolled, program evaluation efforts might fail, clients organize themselves in such a manner as to increase their interactions with the skill or consultant community outside and serve or act as the internal reference group. Government contracting personnel serve this function.

In short summary, the issue of public/private utilization of research and the paradigms that guide it, are intricately related. This note and the evidence contained in the models suggest that utilization is a problem confronting contemporary organizations and certainly individuals in them. However, choice is a relative term to most organizations and the choices are most often easy to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

make when the end-product is known and when institutional capabilities are specific. To both of these problems university persons and the consultant communities are instrumental in aiding policy makers to understand the processes, techniques, and other moral concerns that enter into public policy evaluation. Therefore to beg the question of what organizational forms and prospects exist for development research in Africa, it remains for us to define the needs as these are understood there, and how we can best specify their respective complexities and properties of the actors and factors playing in that referenced context.